

# 1. SELF IMAGE

**Learning as Self-Discovery:** We get education to attain our potential. The teachers that come into our lives help us to discover ourselves, along with instruction in a particular subject. They make the subject we are studying alive. A person went to a great teacher and bowed to him out of respect. “Why are you bowing?” the teacher asked. The person said, “I bow so that with your help I can uplift myself.” The teacher said, “Discover your Self. Have faith in your Self like a line etched in stone and not like a line drawn in sand. Think about your Self all the time. Contemplation is the engine that will uplift you. All other efforts are like wagons. They do not have power to take you anywhere. They have to be pulled by an engine.”

**Formula: Discover your Self!**

**What is Self? Who am I?** At many gas stations in this country, we see a sign for gas prices with a word “Self” written underneath. By that we understand that we fill the car gas tank ourselves. Here also while discovering the Self, we have to make our own effort. Our Self is “Who we are.” In every human being, there is an innate sense which one becomes aware of when one is a baby and stays constant throughout the life. A colleague of mine asked her mother on her seventieth birthday, how she feels. Her mother said, “I am seventy today. But I don’t feel any different. I feel I am the same.” This sense of sameness is the Self.

Over the ages, eastern and western philosophers have written books on their experience of the Self. They say that discovering the Self is empowering. The Self is the Powerhouse within, as the great teacher said. The benefits of this knowledge are discussed in detail later in this chapter. It is not our body, which changes every minute. It is not our mind, which is our factory of thoughts. The Self is not our religion, since the religion is taught to us by someone else. The Self in us gives rise to our “I” and is the governor of all the inner and outer processes and features that are carried out with our awareness or without. The Self defines us as unique human beings. The Self is our existence. It is invisible just as any type of energy such as gravity, electricity, etc., is invisible. As with any energy its effects can be perceived. When the Self leaves, all processes in our body stop functioning and our body needs to be buried or cremated. We may call it Consciousness. It is that Self we are talking about.

**Formula: Self: the innate sense of the awareness of ourselves that is constant throughout our life. It is our existence. Our correct Self Image requires that we tap this Powerhouse within and channel the power through our actions.**

**Creatures of habit:** We are all creatures of habit. We learn to do some things in a particular way and we keep on doing them the same way. These habits keep on building up like a house around us from which we do not know how to escape; nor do we want to. We feel very comfortable in it. We learn to think in a certain way and we feel bound by it. We make certain assumptions as a guide and try to live by them. We look at ourselves many times in a self-deprecating way and that is what brings us down. Society, family, friends, enemies, and even some teachers think about us in a certain way. They say, “You cannot do that. You do not have ability to do that. You are too slow. That is not for you. Be realistic!” Such thoughts we accept and we imbibe them. We should have a better way of looking at any criticism without ever

getting bogged down by it. We will talk about how to handle criticism later. We need to be successful.

Look at babies. How carefree, how joyful they are. How creative they are, how inquisitive they are, how limitless they are. They do not have a concept of limitation. That is the real nature. That is how we were, when we were children. But we became conditioned as we grew up. Our thoughts were conditioned by the people around us and by our own thinking. We have to change our mind set. Otherwise, it will be like the following saying:

If we think the way we've thought,  
We will always get what we've got.

The world around us keeps changing. Physical bodies, circumstances keep changing. In order to handle these changes successfully it is necessary to examine the thinking factory – the mind, and the thoughts it produces. First of all we need to respect it for its work! Our mind is the only working energy for us. Our life expresses itself in thinking, verbalizing and acting. First a thought bubbles up in our mind, we try to put it into words and then bring it into action. All the while, mind is in the background. The mind does not care whether it is a good thought or bad. We need to keep the mind clean and unclouded, and sharpened, using our intellect. The intellect is a power of decision, which we are born with and by which we understand what is good and what is bad. With intellect we can train the mind to be quiet, not to be stressed, not to be anxious about the future, not worry about the past but just to remain in the present.

We should be able to focus the mind on whatever we are working with. A wandering mind does not accomplish anything. Is it possible to change our way of thinking? Of course! Otherwise, we would not be writing this. A prison takes long to build, but only a short time to bring down. You have lived in this dungeon too long! Return to your true nature. Do not listen to admonitions. Look the other way. Have a strong desire to achieve your highest potential. Be aware of the power of the mind and the Self that is within all of us. It is the all-powerful Self that is always with us, that goes everywhere with us.

Do you know how elephants are captured? They are so full of strength. An elephant can uproot a tree with his trunk. He has strength to trample anything in its way. But at the same time, elephants are afraid. It is this fear that drives them to captivity. They keep themselves together in a herd. And if an elephant gets separated from his herd, he is scared. He does not know what to do. He forgets his strength. He runs in all directions. Hunters separate an elephant using a tamed elephant and then capture the scared animal.

Do not be afraid! Realize the power within you. Do you know how mighty you are? You can confine yourself only by your fear. You do not know your will power. It completely depends upon your choice - judicious use of intellect. You don't have to know how a desire that is strong, that arises from your gut feeling, is going to be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled once you know how to look at yourself.

Recent discoveries in Neuroscience have shown how awesome the brain is. There are billions of neural cells in our brain, many more than the celestial bodies in the universe. There are many more neuronal connections, and new connections can be formed to keep us growing. What we

call our conscious effort is not so conscious. The brain picks up only isolated snippets of external objects with the five senses - hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. But all the connections are made inside our brain. Then the world outside appears as a continuous event. It is just like a movie. We know that a movie is made of isolated picture frames with a partial second gap between each two frames. It is the power of seeing that makes it continuous. For more details, you can study books by neuroscientists;; for example, “Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain” by David Eagleman. One of the topmost brain surgeons, Keith Black, says that entering the brain is entering Divine territory!

Neuroscientists say that it is good that we are creatures of habit. By experimenting diligently to practice good behaviors, they soon become automatic, and we do not need to think about them. This is similar to learning to drive a car. One has to be told in the beginning to look in front, at the rear and side view mirrors, and then it becomes a habit. Practicing that we are the Self is a good habit that yields countless benefits, and will become ingrained in the brain.

The emerging field of Positive Psychology is now becoming a strong force to cause improvements in individuals and organizations. Google the word, “positive psychology” and you will see myriads of references. According to Positive Psychology we can train our mind to be happy all the time. There are five definite steps of achieving this goal which will be discussed in the next chapter. The main point here is that a good habit consciously practiced for twenty one days consecutively makes the habit automatic in our brain.

**Formula: Experiment consciously that we are the Self and then it becomes an automatic practice that yields huge benefits.**

**Benefits of the Knowledge of Self:** Creative, great and successful people look at themselves scientifically! Realizing who they are, the scientific outlook helps them to consider any situation objectively without getting involved with any worry or other emotions that bog them down. Their efforts are directed solely at resolving a problem and are not diverted to shortcomings or weaknesses such as worry or fear, desire, greed, pride, anger and jealousy. As a creature of habit, these emotions do show up in everyone, even in great people sometimes, but only for a moment. An additional important benefit successful people have derived from this observation is that there is a reservoir of joy and strength inside them; they do not need any external agency or things to make them feel happy. They are always happy, content, unafraid and confident regardless of external conditions.

When can we feel this joy? We can reflect about this. First of all, when we get up after we have had a sound sleep, we are joyful. When our mind is quiet, we are joyful. But when we have to function in this world, our mind is always active. When we do all our activities, without worry or other shortcomings, we feel happy. When we have interacted with others, and they feel happy, we are happy. There are many other occasions that make us happy. But basically, after we have achieved something with our own effort, after an activity ends meaningfully, our mind becomes quiet and then we are happy. At least until another thought rises in our mind, and activity starts again.

Truly creative, great and successful people do not accept the labels of “creative,” “great,” “successful.” It is what other people feel about them.

The great physicist Stephen Hawking was being honored by President Clinton in the White House. A huge gathering of physics professors and students was there. There was a question and answer session. Somebody said, "You are regarded as an Einstein of the second half of the 20th Century. ..." Stephen Hawking interrupted with his artificial larynx (since Hawking who has Lou Gehrig's disease, cannot talk with his own voice), "It is only a hype!" (March 08, 1998, reception before his millennium lecture)

The following is the description of how a person looks at her/himself scientifically. I know that I exist. My body, thoughts and emotions; my name, my successes or failures; my relationships and religion, and my nationality are not me. I exist. I am conscious. I become aware of all other attributes such as gender, age, relatives, job, studies, and the world, after I am awake from my sleep and I am conscious of my body and surroundings. I exist independently of these attributes. My accomplishments or failures depend upon my efforts and other factors at a given time. My body has changed from the time I was born; it undergoes constant changes. The same is true about my thoughts or emotions. They have their span in time. There is something in me that has never changed.

I am aware that I exist. I have three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and deep sleep. But I am beyond them. In my waking state there is time, space and causation. There are thoughts, feelings (often too many negative thoughts and feelings. We will see how to deal with them in the next chapter) and physical activity (often too much physical activity. We will see in the next chapter, how some activities benefit us). In my dream state there is time, surroundings or space and causation, which is often different from my waking state. The feelings, thoughts or activity in my dream state are all of a different kind. In my deep sleep state there is no consciousness regarding time, space, thoughts, feelings, emotions or the world. But one thing is for sure: I do exist and I am aware of all states, including deep sleep. The sense of continuity of our beingness is due to consciousness and awareness.

Consciousness is the cause of love I feel towards myself, my family and others. It is the cause of my joy. It is the cause of all my emotions. It is the cause of my intellect by which I reason. It is the cause of everything that makes me a human being. This understanding frees me from fear. This understanding frees me from my emotions. I do not get entangled in them, since I know their source. It makes me love myself and others equally. I know that I have all the power to do anything that needs to be done. It is that energy which gives me inner strength that gives me courage to face what life brings to me. That frees me from any burden, any stress. When the things around me or thoughts within me seem to be too many, I focus my attention on this source, and suddenly I am quiet. (This process is called meditation. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.) I always have a choice of getting enmeshed in the emotions or remaining free. I am free.

Whatever assumptions we have lived by so far, it doesn't matter. We can challenge them especially if we feel confined. Let us accept the assumption that we are Consciousness and Awareness and, as an experiment, start with that assumption from the time we begin our day. There are many people who live with these assumptions and have not come across any contradictions. We also have the choice to live scientifically. According to neuroscience, this choice becomes our automatic habit.

**Formula: Arise! Become aware! Reject any limitation. Be fearless. Explore your Power. Build the correct Self image.**

**Criticism:** Now let us see how to handle criticism.

“Let a critic be my neighbor. I am greatly indebted to him. He removes my faults, and cleanses my mind free of charge. He carries my burden and I become free of mine.” (A Marathi proverb.)

If somebody criticizes us we should take a close look at ourselves. We must check whether the fault mentioned exists in us. If it is there, then without taking the criticism to heart, we should try to improve ourselves. We should try not to commit again the mistake of which we are guilty. If the fault does not exist in us, we should leave the critic alone to his/her business and we should mind ours unconcerned.

The most important thing is that we should not deprecate ourselves, knowing how awesome the brain is, how awesome the Self is. Often, we ourselves are our harshest critics! We should not criticize ourselves to the point that we become disabled. If we see any mistakes in ourselves, we should be ready to correct them. But not taking some action for fear of making a mistake is cowardice. In any case, we have to be always aware of our great perfect potential.

**Formula: Listen! Analyze objectively! Reject the lie! Accept the Truth; know and grow!**

**Success:** For any activity to be successful, we must know that our sincere effort is the most important factor but it is *not the only* factor. If we regard success as a bicycle wheel, then our effort is only one spoke! Unless all the needed spokes come together, the wheel does not exist. Yet your consciousness energy has such a magic that the most improbable happens when your will and love come together. When we work for something wholeheartedly and steadily, it happens by pulling all the necessary aspects together, for **it is a function of the mind to make things happen**. Problems arise when we have defined and limited ourselves. When we do not constrain ourselves by categorizing ourselves as “this” or “that,” all conflict ceases. We have to know *who* we are rather than *what* we have. We must know our needs, but must be flexible with wants, to get rid of conflicts. The needs are common to everyone in a situation we are in, while wants are specific. It is possible that there is something other than what we want that can fulfill the need.

Sometimes a situation seems very complicated and we get overwhelmed. We can train ourselves not to get overwhelmed. Eliyahu Goldratt was the originator of the Theory of Constraints. A constraint is that which stands in the way of achieving a goal. We discuss this theory in detail in the final chapter. Eli Goldratt says in his book, “Inherent Simplicity” (For example, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsabpOUNzac](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsabpOUNzac)) that the more complex a situation is, the more inherent simplicity there is in it. By finding the cause and effect relationships between the various components and finding the core constraint, we can discover the inherent simplicity. By finding the inherent simplicity, we can always find a breakthrough resolution to an apparent conflict. That is how we should approach all the subjects and situations in life. The inherent simplicity is our own Consciousness – our Self, since our world experiences all begin with Consciousness. We will see in later chapters how to find the inherent simplicity in seemingly complex situations and resolve problems or conflicts in them.

**Humility:** If we are successful, it is equally important that we do not need to be elated, arrogant and look down on another person who is not as lucky as we are. That is also a sign of weakness.

Our effort alone is never the cause of our success. Every success or failure is transient. It will be forgotten soon. Above all, thinking every now and then of the true nature of existence and self-awareness, the source of everything, frees us from the ideas of limitations, negating emotions, and allows continuous progress. Seeing the beauty of nature around us, flowers, leaves, trees, and animals, and thinking about their complicated and intricate structure can make any human being, no matter how successful, humble. Contemplation of even the functioning of different processes in our own bodies is humbling.

We must take our success and accomplishments in stride. When we are successful we must look up to people who are more successful than we are. There are always plenty of them. When we are failing or facing problems, we should not pity ourselves saying “poor me.” We should think of those who are less fortunate or downtrodden than we are. There are always plenty of them. This attitude keeps the head high and the feet on the ground.

**Formula: For success, develop the correct attitude. Do not think any situation is too complex. Find the inherent simplicity and cause and effect connections. Focus on working with the inherent simplicity and attain success.**

**Helping others:** We should help others; but never out of pity, or as a favor. We have to help others because we are in a position to help, and because there is satisfaction when the person helped feels good. We have to regard ourselves as an instrument of Life and need not feel pride for helping our fellow beings. We also receive help from unexpected places when we are in need. So it is just giving back to Life in return for the help we receive.

**Formula: Help others as a privilege. Help them with compassion and love and without pride.**

**Remain constantly inspired:** In order to attain our great potential we must always remain inspired. There are many great works which are available to us. These are stories about a single person or a group of people who show how to accomplish great things in spite of adversity. Regardless of family, race, religion, or nationality, such stories help us to remain inspired. Their works transcend all limitations and nations. They truly represent humanity.

For example, one must see the TV miniseries or DVDs, such as titled “African American Lives”, compiled by historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr. The series illustrates the life-changing journeys of a diverse group of highly accomplished African Americans including Whoopi Goldberg, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Quincy Jones, Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, and Oprah Winfrey. When a person is bemoaning his or her circumstances, the person has to see how resilient the people in the series were, what kinds of difficulties they went through, as compared with the person’s present conditions. There are so many such resources that can inspire us. Look at the opportunities and help that are available for anyone who wants to do something creative and remain focused on his/her goal.

As we have seen, it is possible to train the mind to think only creative thoughts, by steadily watching the mind rather than by running with it. Under any circumstances, never feel depressed. We will describe a few techniques of centering the mind, in Chapter 7 of this guide.

**Formula: Remain always inspired. Keep reading inspiring works/stories of great people of the world. Bring their teachings into action in your unique way.**

We conclude this section with two poems of best wishes.

**MOVE ON!**

(In honor of all students)

Come on! It's time to move on.  
Time is short; we'll gain a lot  
If we move on.  
It matters not, what we never got  
There is no time to bemoan our lot,  
Once we move on.  
With love, honor and good feelings  
    we greet  
Each of us, and each one  
    we meet  
As we move on.

We've got to learn mathematics,  
Physics and statistics,  
History, politics,  
Logic and linguistics;  
Chemistry, biology  
Sociology, psychology,  
Philosophy, Geology,  
Anatomy and physiology,  
Reading, and writing  
Engineering, computing  
Marketing, accounting  
Playing and acting.  
We make a choice to our liking,  
And we excel in all we are taking.  
There is no limit to our thinking  
We *move on* without shrinking.

With mind full of determination  
Great lives giving inspiration,  
With Love-filled communication,  
Study done with dedication  
The whole world helping in fascination,  
We are headed for our destination.

The One Consciousness that's in us and every place present  
We become aware of Its power and accept Its present  
With Bliss filled in our hearts, we're in the groove,  
There is nothing to stop us as we're on the move.

U. N.

## As you look forward to your studies

My dear Student,

Welcome, dear student!

We wish that you succeed continuously.

Focus on your courses vigilantly,

But Nothing in the world there is, to take so seriously,

As to cause us stress, sap our energy, or work furiously.

The world around us does curiously

Keep changing continuously;

No one remembers,

Our successes or failures.

Doing their own thing people are busy,

At a pace that makes them dizzy.

So we better spend our time doing something creative

To express ourselves best, why wait for world's approval to receive.

Our peers may hate us or praise us for our stand.

But we should firmly know where we stand.

At our mind often, we better have a peek,

For it alone makes us strong or weak.

What is it thinking? Inferiority or superiority?

Good of us and everyone? What is its priority?

Pray, "Oh my mind, think only a good thought.

To be depressed or arrogant, you ought not."

The thinking machine forms its habit

It's up to our intelligence what we feed it.

We are criticized for something,

We have done or even we have not done.

We must check if the criticism is really true,

If so, correct it, and make it fun.

If not so, just brush it off with no bad feelings

For those who put us "under their gun."

Something might look so elusive

Even though very hard we might try,

We better learn from the situation

Why get disappointed and cry?

By being completely open

In confidence we perceive

With patience we wait on Life

For Its bounty to receive.

Our company is very important.

Why waste time in just any throng?

In good company we help one another



We won't hurt anyone or ourselves;; we will do no wrong.  
Better citizens of the world we become  
For every creature "we always have a song."  
If we or someone makes a mistake  
May we not go after them with a prong  
We forgive ourselves and others  
Secure in ourselves we keep going strong.

We can remain in constant bliss  
In company of the people who are so  
Read their works and think about their state  
Why adopt the world's ways and live "so so"?  
They teach us that our sorrow and troubles  
Arise from our ego and attachment  
The remedy they prescribe is  
Develop discrimination and detachment.  
To take charge of our mind  
And direct it is to discriminate  
To practice detachment is to know  
From Consciousness all things originate.

Being constantly aware of Consciousness  
Which is the root of our being  
Which is the same for every being,  
We get constant bliss, constant guidance  
Constant Love, and a sense of well-being.

So long Dear Student,  
Love, hugs and every best wish  
With great affection  
From Chitra<sup>1</sup> and Umesh.

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<sup>1</sup> Author's wife

